

PROHIBITION OF POLYGRAPH USE

Senator Bayh has introduced S. 1841, a bill which would completely bar the use of the polygraph examination in an employment context by this and other Federal agencies. Several similar bills have been introduced in the House.

This Agency believes that the polygraph examination is an essential part of our security program. This belief is strongly supported by experience. During the period from 1963 to 1974, 60 percent of all applicants disqualified on security grounds were rejected on information solely developed by or substantiated by polygraph interviews.

The predominant use of the polygraph is as part of the hiring process. After a decision to hire an applicant for a staff position has been made (based on the needs of the Agency and the applicant's qualifications), our Office of Security conducts an investigation to determine if the applicant is of excellent character and of unquestioned loyalty, integrity, discretion, and trustworthiness. Upon completion of the investigation and the accomplishment of medical examinations, a polygraph examination is given as the final investigative aid in the hiring process.

The Agency has adopted strict procedures to forestall abuses and to protect the rights of those taking the examination. These include:

--each applicant for employment is notified at the time he is given an application of the intent to use a polygraph examination and each must sign an advance consent statement;

--advance interviews with the Office of Personnel and the Office of Medical Services determine if information has been developed as a result of their screening procedures that might preclude the advisability of conducting a polygraph interview;

--notification of the privilege against self-incrimination if a question may pertain to a violation of the criminal law;

--review of the general content of all questions that the applicant will be asked is made before testing to assure that all questions relate directly to security considerations (no questions on religious thought or practices or political affiliations of a non-subversive nature are permitted);

--the applicant is told that the examination may be monitored and possibly recorded to let him know there are no hidden procedures;

--random monitoring by a specialized supervisor to insure that no improper questions are asked;

--maintenance of polygraph records in separate files with very strict need-to-know rules governing access;

--no polygraph-acquired information can be released outside the Agency without the Director's approval or that of the Deputy Director and only if such a release is necessary in the interest of national security;

--the polygraph examiner makes no recommendation as to the security suitability of the person tested;

--the polygraph report is evaluated as but one element in the total investigative report.

In addition to the above, in order to insure that the polygraph examination program maintains rigid adherence to established standards, spot interviews have been conducted with applicants who have completed polygraph tests. In one program, several thousand female applicants were interviewed after their polygraph examinations and there were no indications of abuses.

Finally, the selection of polygraph officers is extremely discriminating as to their qualifications, intelligence, integrity, and high character. They are given a rigorous training program which is a continuing process to keep them abreast of developments in their professional field. In this respect, CIA has maintained a vigorous research effort inquiring into new techniques and equipment to insure that highest standards are maintained.